DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 153 TM 033 838

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TITLE Districts Building Teacher Capacity in Classroom Assessment: Lessons Learned about the District Role in Building Teachers' Capacity To Assess Students More Effectively through an Interconnected System of Programs and Policies.
PUB DATE 2002-04-00
NOTE 46p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April, 2002). "With assistance from Jan Williamson and Patricia Schenck." Some figures might not reproduce well.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; Interviews; *Professional Development; *School Districts; *Student Evaluation; Teacher Made Tests; Teacher Surveys

ABSTRACT

This paper describes lessons learned about the district role in building teachers capacity to assess students more effectively. It also presents a framework based on experiences with school districts that demonstrates how districts leverage an interconnected system of strategies to have an impact on the quality of instruction and assessment in the classroom. Lessons are derived from research conducted at SERVE, the federally funded research and development laboratory serving the southeastern states. The major sources were a training initiative, including teacher surveys, and interviews with key informants from 15 school districts. The interconnected system of strategies derived from these sources includes those that: (1) build teacher capacity (professional development, teacher evaluation, and instructional leadership); (2) set the conditions in the district for continuous improvement (defining strategies and strategic planning); (3) support effective school improvement processes (informal school reviews and allocation of funds); and (4) monitor progress (use of assessments, use of data on classroom environments, and defining grade-level proficiency). Three appendixes contain attachments that provide supplemental information, the interview protocol and a table of districts interviewed, and the baseline classroom assessment questionnaire. (Contains 23 references.) (SLD)

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ED 464 153

Districts Building Teacher Capacity in Classroom Assessment

Lessons learned about the district role in building teachers' capacity to assess students more effectively through an interconnected system of programs and policies

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Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans, April 2002

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Introduction

Purpose

The primary purpose of this paper is to describe lessons learned about the district role in building teachers' capacity to assess students more effectively, given that the lack of "assessment literacy" among educators has been identified by some as a key barrier to improving student achievement (Stiggins, 1999). A second purpose is to present a framework, based on experiences with districts, that will demonstrate how districts leverage an interconnected system of strategies in order to impact the quality of instruction and assessment in classrooms. The interconnected system of strategies includes those that: 1) build teacher capacity (e.g., professional development, teacher evaluation, instructional leadership); 2) set the conditions in the district for continuous improvement (e.g., defining standards, strategic planning); 3) support effective school improvement processes (e.g., informal school reviews, allocation of funds); 4) monitor progress (e.g., use of assessments that supplement state tests, use of data on quality of classroom learning environments, defining grade-level proficiency).

Background of Project

Lessons learned described in this paper are summarized from the first two authors' work at SERVE, the federally funded Research and Development laboratory serving the southeastern states. Since 1990, SERVE has been supporting educators in the southeast by developing professional development resources (SERVE, 1998 and 2001) to help teachers improve their classroom assessment practices. The state policy context in the southeastern states has changed during that time span.

Our experience of the 1990s in working with educators in the southeast can be conceptualized in terms of three approaches to assessment reform. The three approaches are briefly discussed below:

1) <u>The Alternative Assessment Movement:</u>
   The assessment reform language of the early 1990s was alternative, authentic or performance assessment. The logic behind this movement was that how students are assessed makes a difference in how they develop as learners. Global competition and other forces were leading business leaders to conclude that the workplace of the future would require that "all American high school students must develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they are to enjoy a productive and satisfying life" (SCANS, 1991,p.vi). National discipline organizations developed content standards reflecting the emerging thinking about what students needed to know and be able to do. In some cases, notably in mathematics, these national disciplinary standards found their way into state standards documents.

   The implication of these higher expectations for students was that assessment at the classroom, school, district, and state level needed to be more performance-based, reflecting these more complex learning goals. States and districts were interested in

using performance assessment to drive curriculum change in classrooms around these higher expectations. However, over time, states began to back away from performance assessments as the central part of state testing programs due to higher costs, difficulty in scoring and administering, and unanswered technical problems (Koretz, 1996; Asp, 2000).

2) The Standards-Based Reform Movement:
A major influence on state policy that emerged in 1994 was the reauthorization amendments for Title I, which reflected a theory of how to drive progress toward higher standards for all students. This law envisioned that by the year 2000 all states would have in place content standards, assessments aligned with the standards, and mechanisms for judging school progress toward achievement goals. Many states spent a great deal of effort on developing their standards for what students should know and be able to do during this period. Developing state assessments aligned with state standards was also a focus. The term standards-based reform implies that the task of laying out clearly what all students should know and be able to do is the first domino that, in turn, should cause all other reform dominoes to fall, including classroom assessment.

3) The Accountability Movement:
In the last years of the 1990s, accountability legislation – legislation that described how schools would be "graded" and the consequences of certain grades- proved a magnet for educators' attention. The language of accountability reform was centered less around curriculum reform (and using assessment to drive more challenging teaching in the classroom) than on getting all students to grade level (as determined by a state test). Rather than supplementing the early 1990s goals of classroom change and curriculum reform, the accountability movement seemed to supplant the earlier goal, and focus some schools' attention exclusively on getting more students to "pass the state test".

Whereas the policy "reform context" in the early 1990s (states experimenting with performance assessment) supported teachers' interest in the use of classroom assessment methods and purposes that reflected needed "real world" competencies, the accountability context in 2002 supports teachers' interest in the use of classroom assessment that mimics competencies needed to do well on state tests. The implication of this change is that teachers are not likely to reflect on the quality or effectiveness of their classroom assessment practices. We believe some kind of structured support and intervention by districts is needed to help teachers understand the positive role classroom assessment can play in improved student learning.

SERVE began work in 1995 with a small number of districts interested in building their teachers' capacity for classroom assessment. Using assessment to improve student learning has consistently been identified as a weak area for many teachers (Crooks, 1988; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Stiggins has argued throughout the 1990s for more attention to assessment in classrooms.

> *"We have centered so heavily on the development of ever-more-sophisticated psychometrics and test development tactics for our high stakes tests that we have almost completely ignored the other 99.9% of the assessments that happen in a student's life.*

These are the assessments developed and used by their teachers in the classroom. If we seek excellence in education, then the time has come to invest whatever it takes to assure that every teacher is gathering dependable information about student learning, day-to-day and week-to-week, not just year-to-year.

This action must be central to all future school improvement efforts, because if assessment is not working effectively day to day in the classroom, then assessment at all other levels (district, state, national or international) represents a complete waste of time and money" (Stiggins, 1999).

The district plays a critical role in structuring the professional growth opportunities teachers need to translate the state demands for higher student performance into effective classroom strategies. Effective capacity building at the district level should create a "critical mass" of teachers and administrators who share a common assessment language and who understand how assessment can be used to help all students improve. Some evidences of teachers' skillful use of assessment include

- ✓ Use of assessment methods appropriately matched to learning goals
- ✓ Use of exemplars or high level student work samples to help clarify teacher expectations
- ✓ Use of rubrics to make expectations for particular assignments or skills clear
- ✓ Use of formative feedback to help students improve the quality of their work
- ✓ Use of data on learning to shape subsequent instruction and make decisions
- ✓ Use of assessment information to motivate students by involving them as full partners in the assessment, record-keeping and communication process
- ✓ Use of assessment information to communicate effectively (e.g., using report cards, portfolios, and student-led conferences)

Improving assessment practices as outlined above is difficult for teachers. Similarly, mounting an effort to build assessment capacity (change these practices in a critical mass of teachers) is difficult for districts. But some districts have set this goal for themselves as a necessary step toward raising standards and are learning some valuable lessons. This paper explores the district role in developing a critical mass of teachers who can use assessment to help students achieve at the higher levels envisioned by state standards and assessments. Although the focus here is on how to best support teacher change in the use of assessment methods and practices that develop students into better learners, the implications of the lessons learned are relevant to efforts to improve the quality of teaching, in general.

Information Sources

Realizing there is probably no optimum process for a district to build teacher assessment capacity, there are certainly some key lessons learned (procedural knowledge) to be gained from those who have worked to build teacher capacity in assessment. The lessons learned represent the conclusions of the senior author, Nancy McMunn, based on data in working closely with districts from 1995-2000 in providing an "awareness" level of professional development for teachers. In addition, the lessons learned build on collaborative work with Ken O'Connor who collected interview data from 15 districts as a way of throwing a broader net for generating

lessons learned. Both Nancy McMunn and Ken O'Connor also have participated since 1997 in the Association for Curriculum and Development's (ASCD) Assessment Consortium. Site visits to ASCD Assessment Consortium member districts (who are considered to be "cutting edge" in terms of assessment reform) yielded notebooks of materials, articles, school and district observations, and other information around building assessment capacity. Districts visited were in Colorado, Vermont, Washington, Florida, and Arizona. Information gained from these visits was also considered in developing the lessons learned. The two main sources of information are described in more detail below.

Source #1: Bay District Schools and SERVE Collaborate (1996—2000)

SERVE has worked with Bay District Schools in Panama City, Florida as an Intensive Research and Development Site. Various instruments have been used with this district to collect pre and post assessment training data on teacher understanding, use of, and implementation of various assessment practices. Most instruments used (Appendix A and C) consisted of brief questions, with yes/no, Likert-scale, and open-response items which served to identify assessment issues or concepts the district needed to address in designing, developing, and implementing professional development activities.

Bay District in Panama City, Florida began collaborating with SERVE in 1996 to implement a research and development project entitled Target/SERVE. This district wide initiative involved training all 1,700 Bay District teachers and administrators in quality assessment using a resource developed by SERVE and modified for this district entitled: TARGET: *Creating Effective Student Assessments*. Unique aspects of this training were that, after the first two days of assessment training, teachers were required to develop and use a performance assessment with their students, which was then critiqued at a two-day follow-up session. During this same time period, the district mandated training of all teachers and administrators in curriculum alignment (training developed by the state of Florida around the roll-out of the newly developed Sunshine State Standards).

This mandatory professional development on curriculum alignment and classroom assessment was one of the largest training initiatives ever in this district and it did provide a common message and language about how teachers should react to state standards. Survey data from over 1,024 teachers showed that, after the assessment training, 80% reported needing additional assistance in the area of assessment. The responses most frequently reported were related to time for planning and practice to develop and use more quality assessments. Teachers also responded that they needed more help with the understanding, development, and use of rubrics. (See Appendix A).

This district used the information collected from teachers to plan for the next level of work in building capacity. Some of the significant lessons learned were:

A. The initial TARGET Training did motivate teachers to try different assessment methods or continue learning about assessment
B. The overall use of rubrics was limited – teachers identified this area as a need for continued training and support.
C. Very few teachers reported using rubrics to provide feedback – from conversations with some of the teachers it was clear that there was limited understanding of the use of

diagnostic and formative assessment as ways to provide feedback to the learner and teacher

D. The District needed to find ways to encourage schools and staff to find time for working collaboratively on classroom assessment
E. It was difficult for teachers to view assessment as a process – it seemed that many teachers still saw assessment as an isolated event at the end of a teaching episode; thus, there was a need for the district to communicate a vision for "quality' classroom assessment.
F. There was some change in assessment methods used – however, the way the assessments were included in grades and the use of those grades were in question by the teachers and reviewing staff.

In summary, the four-day training program, developed by SERVE and mandated for all teachers in Bay District did seem to have created an "awareness" among teachers about some of the issues in using classroom assessment well. The district has continued to require this training of all new teachers hired. However, it is not clear the extent to which "best practices" in classroom assessment have been implemented, particularly in light of the recent state push in Florida to grade schools, which seems to have resulted in teachers reverting to classroom assessment that mimics state test formats.

Source #2: Interviews of Key Informants from Districts Involved in Building Teacher Capacity in Classroom Assessment (2000-2001)

As a way of summarizing what has been learned about districts on the "cutting edge" of assessment reform, SERVE developed a structured interview protocol to use in the spring of 2000 with key informants from 15 districts who had implemented some professional development in classroom assessment. Fifteen districts were selected for interviews based on their work with assessment and standards as evidenced by: a) invited membership in the ASCD Assessment Consortium, or, b) work with a regional educational laboratory, or c) recommendations from a consultant.

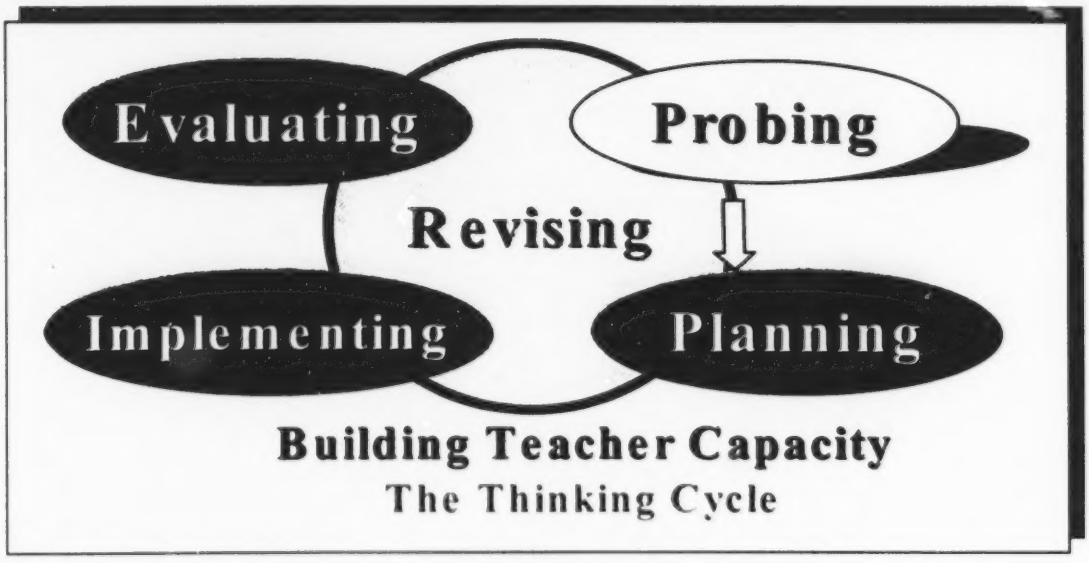
The fifteen school districts were in six states (three in Mississippi, and two each in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina) and one province of Canada (Ontario). The systems ranged in size from a district with 1,160 students to a district with 87,000 students. The percentage of minority students ranged from less than 2% to 95%. The fifteen districts were sent cover letters informing them of the interview protocol and inviting participation by a key informant who understood the system's efforts in building teacher capacity. Both written and taped interview responses were collected. Ken O'Connor conducted the interviews for SERVE. The data were analyzed and themes summarized by question. These interview data were used as the second source for generating the lessons learned described below (See Appendix B).

Lessons Learned

It is abundantly clear from the data collected from the 15 districts and the work SERVE has done around building assessment capacity with Bay District (Appendix A) that this is a complex and

difficult task that takes multiple years to accomplish. As a way of reflecting on all of this information, the authors have summarized their impressions by generating a set of lessons learned that can inform future study of the district role.

We describe fourteen lessons that we believe can help districts think about a process for building teachers' assessment capacity. We have categorized the actions into four major areas that represent a district 'thinking' process for implementing new initiatives. These areas are Probing, Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating with Revising being a continuous part of the cycle.



Probing refers to consideration of the kinds of things that might be foundational for an effort to build teachers' assessment capacity. For example, is there a strategic plan in the district that supports such an investment of resources? Time might be spent on articulating with others the need for the initiative and in brainstorming the questions or strategies that might define the initiative.

Planning refers to laying out specific information around the how and what of the initiative. Figuring out the short term and long-term goals, designing an implementation plan, determining the targeted audience(s), determining exactly what the research and evaluation needs are, finding funding and/or support, obtaining buy-in from key players or coordinating with other initiatives or staff within the district and/or schools are all relevant here.

Implementing refers to actually 'doing the work' to begin, support, and build capacity to sustain the initiative that has been outlined in the planning stage.

Evaluating refers to collecting data and information to decide if the planning and implementation were successful and at what level. It helps to determine the strengths and weaknesses of what was done and guides future plans.

The organization of the lessons learned is not exhaustive or prioritized. The items described below are those that emerged from the information sources we reviewed. It is important to recognize that each item can stand alone, but each is also inextricably linked with others. The list that follows is not intended as a recipe but as a way of organizing what we gleaned from districts that were trying to build teachers' assessment capacity.

Probing

1. Have a vision or plan that supports standards-based assessment
2. Take on the challenge of change in secondary schools
3. Define standards-based assessment, especially as it relates to large-scale (state) assessments

Planning

4. Involve district leadership
5. Create time
6. Include school leaders (early)
7. Ensure adequate financial resources
8. Organize resources, especially staff, to support change

Implementation

9. Provide assessment workshops – start with volunteers but at some point make it a requirement for all teachers
10. Require classroom application and follow-up
11. Develop models – units, assessments, etc.
12. Have a flexible approach/examples

Evaluation

13. Collect evidence (to help look at student and teacher work) (See Appendix C for Baseline Sample Questionnaire)
14. Encourage action research

PROBING

1. Have a vision or plan that supports standards-based assessment.

It is critical that everyone in the district understands the WHY of the efforts to build assessment capacity. This can be provided most effectively by having a clearly articulated vision or plan of the what and why of the capacity building process. Linking

In 1998, the Superintendent of Bay District Schools in Panama City, Florida laid the foundation for the district's efforts to build assessment capacity. A daylong visioning session to promote a systemic approach for the district was held to build consensus that all district improvement efforts should promote Quality Student Achievement as the major focus. It was advised that staff

- Plan systemically
- Take action and experiment
- Assess and gather data
- Study, reflect, and evaluate using the data
- Modify actions based on the knowledge gained, and
- Revisit and clarify goals and purposes for all work as relevant to improving student achievement.

It was evident that the superintendent was setting the example that the work at the district level was about a continual improvement process for student achievement. If an effort did not lead toward student improvement then it was not important and that if this attitude was prominent at all levels, district, school, and teacher, then a more systemic approach to improving student achievement would emerge.

assessment capacity as a driving force to improving student achievement can help focus district efforts. Creating and maintaining a district assessment committee (with members from various schools and district office staff) is an asset to keeping a district focused on a vision for change.

2. Take on the challenge of change in secondary schools.

Most districts have begun by having a K-12 focus for their initiative to build assessment capacity but have found that their efforts meet with more resistance at the secondary level. This seems to be particularly so in the areas of grading and reporting. Several districts have redesigned their elementary report cards but have not carried this revision process into secondary reporting. It is very important that districts support quality assessment and reporting practices at the secondary level.

> The Waterloo Catholic District School Board has taken on the high school challenge at the classroom level. The School Board is committed to helping students achieve the expectations outlined for the Ontario Catholic School Graduate. The District also intends to ensure that the assessment, evaluation, grading, and reporting practices in the secondary schools are consistent with policy, system philosophy, and mission. To do this they have developed guidelines that provide a common language for district assessment terminology and share with teachers the expectations that guide classroom practices to ensure consistency for all students.
>
> For example: Under "Assessment and Evaluation of Student Achievement of Curriculum Expectations," Section 1.5 states that teachers will use ongoing "formative" assessment activities to monitor student performance and provide feedback in an effort to enhance and improve learning and instruction and that formative or diagnostic measures will not be used in determination of report card grades rather the data will be tracked and kept in folders, portfolios or recorded separately in a grade book.

3. Define standards-based assessment, especially as it relates to large-scale (state) assessments.

Even the most successful districts felt that they are involved in an ongoing struggle to maintain quality classroom assessment practices in the face of perceived pressure from state accountability systems to raise test scores (which in turn can lead teachers to narrow the classroom assessment methods used). Districts need to become advocates for quality assessment by publicly defining standards-based assessment and by promoting the appropriate use of assessment results. Teachers need help in understanding that standards-based assessment in the classroom does not mean that assessment methods should mimic the content and format of state tests.

PLANNING

4. Involve district leadership.

It is clear from the districts involved in this study that a critical component is the public role of district leadership. The superintendent – and ideally the School Board, must be involved from the beginning and should make frequent public statements supporting any activities aimed at building teachers' assessment capacity. It is important to keep people in key areas informed of any specific initiatives that may affect the capacity building process. For example, purchasing technology software for creating district reporting forms (cards) needs to mesh with classroom assessment efforts. Thus, the technology leaders and assessment leaders need to discuss and review the software options together. When district communication around assessment capacity is limited, then some efforts may be at cross-purposes.

5. Create time.

The single thing that teachers need most to be able to change their practice is time to discuss, reflect, and plan. Thus, any attempt to build teachers' assessment capacity must provide this time. There are many ways to make time available for teachers to work together but teachers should be asked to help determine how to do this and how their time would be monitored or facilitated.

6. Include school leaders (early).

Similar to the critical role of the superintendent at the district level, the visible involvement and support of interested school building administrators is critical to success at the school level. If administrators appear disinterested or question any initiative, it provides teachers who are looking for any excuse not to participate with exactly what they are seeking. Administrators who want teachers to implement better classroom assessment practices need to know what to look for when they evaluate teachers or provide feedback for improvement.

Bay District Schools mandated that all principals and other school leaders actively participate in the required four-day assessment training for all teachers. Like the participating teachers, the principals were given an assignment to bring to the follow-up session (e.g., classroom observations of a particular assessment process). They also participated in a meeting with district staff, prior to the training, that focused on the goals and significance of this training. As a way of keeping principals focused on instructional quality, the district requires principals to attend monthly professional development sessions called PS101 led by the Assistant Superintendent. These seminars explore issues in improving instruction.

7. Ensure adequate financial resources.

Building assessment capacity costs money – money for expertise and material resources, and mainly funding to support teacher time. A multi-year effort will be necessary for success so districts must be sure that they have the necessary financial resources to maintain the process. Districts that seek larger grants can offer mini-grants to schools as an incentive for making classroom assessment a focus for professional development.

The Alcorn School District in Corinth, MS was able to expand their assessment emphasis beyond an initial pilot group of schools receiving SERVE's assessment training. They wrote for and received grant funding from multiple sources to help cover additional training for teachers throughout the district in assessment. With this funding they were also able to bring in other programs that complemented their focus on assessment capacity building.

8. Organize resources: especially staff, to support change.

Organizational structures and human resource allocation are put in place to meet perceived needs at district and school levels. Sometimes these structures become fixed regardless of what changes are being made/attempted.

Some districts are rethinking their use of positions. For example, Bay District Schools now has a Classroom Assessment Resource Teacher who knows what quality assessment should look like and develops strategies to help teachers improve. The duties of this position go beyond those of the more traditional testing and evaluation position that involves the administration and reporting of state and other assessments.

In Douglas County Schools in Colorado, there is a Director of Assessment who works to help the district keep focused on standards and assessment. Aurora Public Schools in Aurora, CO also has placed resource teachers in each school who are there to help schools work with standards, assessment and instruction.

Several districts have changed the allocation of human resources and staffing structures to provide individuals whose role is dedicated to providing assistance to teachers where they are – both physically and pedagogically. Creating roles such as "Quality Work Facilitator" or "Instructional Facilitator" appears to be a very powerful way to ensure best practice and build assessment capacity. At the district level, it is important to have someone on staff who is an expert on classroom assessment and how it differs from large-scale assessment processes.

IMPLEMENTATION

9. Provide assessment workshops– start with volunteers but at some point make it a requirement for all teachers.

One of the basic problems with building district assessment capacity is the lack of training in quality assessment that teachers have received. It is thus essential that teachers be provided with this training. The efforts of the districts involved in this study suggest that this training is most effective when it starts with volunteers and/or teachers identified as stars/leaders, or school based assessment teams. Some districts have only used this approach but if a district is truly going to build assessment capacity, before too long all teachers should receive assessment training. Districts should invest in time to create an assessment-training program for all teachers – from building a knowledge base for some to continued growth in this area for others. This is necessary so that there is a common language and common expectations in the district about how standards, instruction, and assessment should be implemented.

Ken O'Connor the third author reflects on his experience with Pressure vs. Support for initiatives that lead to building capacity in assessment: "*One of the most difficult decisions that a district has to make when it decides to try to 'move' all of its educators to greater assessment literacy and more appropriate assessment, grading, and reporting practices is to determine the appropriate balance between pressure and support. To a considerable extent this balance depends on the culture or tradition of the district with regard to change.*

Bay District Schools in Panama City, Florida began their assessment work through a grant they received from the state (called TARGET in the district). They set up a program within the district for the money to be used by the schools but only through an application process. The stipulation for receiving any money was that the school would form a team that would participate in the awareness training in assessment offered by the district. This process helped to build a cadre of trained staff for schools and each school could then use their money to receive additional resources, attend a conference, or other training session to continue building their own assessment literacy. When the district then mandated assessment training for all teachers (the next year) many from this initial group (after they were trained as trainers) were able to help in training the teachers and offer support and encouragement for others back at their school.

A support model is preferable in terms of developing appropriate attitudes toward the change but a support model alone generally results in relatively little real change. A pressure model is preferable if rapid change is desired but such an approach may be met by resistance and subversion and the change may be more apparent than real.

Having observed a number of districts that have struggled with this dilemma it appears that the most effective model is one that starts with support and voluntary involvement but after the change effort has 'taken root' moves to a pressure model with a clear requirement that

assessment, grading, and/or reporting practices will be in line with district expectations by a stated date preferably at least a year from the date of the announcement. Examples of this approach have been observed in Bay District Schools, York Region District School Board, and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board."

10. Require classroom application and follow-up.

Some districts have provided excellent basic assessment training but have been disappointed to find that this training has had little impact on what actually happens in the classroom. It is therefore important that training always include the expectation that teachers will apply what they have learned in the classroom. It is important to hold teachers accountable for using the knowledge they gain and for reflecting on what they learned. This seems to work best when teachers attend follow up sessions where they are required to share examples of what they did in their classroom and discuss what worked. When teachers get excited about how changes in their classroom practices affects student learning the change will be sustained. It is also important to hold administrators accountable for making sure they know and use the language and understand how standards, instruction, and assessment must link in the classroom. The teacher evaluation system in use in the district should be reviewed to ensure that expectations for teachers in the area of classroom assessment are clearly defined.

In the Madison County School District in Huntsville, AL assessment literacy was built through a district assessment team who asked each school in their district to send a team of staff from their schools to work with SERVE and others over a two-year period. These groups (about 85 staff) were trained in classroom assessment based on SERVE's training and then were asked to go back to their classrooms and practice with their students and bring back to the continuing sessions what they learned, and had done with their students or schools after the training sessions. For some schools individual teachers concentrated on understanding and using rubrics correctly with their students, or just getting the whole process of assessment in their minds. Other schools developed assessment units around standards that the school had in place and ended their school year with a huge exhibition that shared with parents the things their students had done throughout the year and how it was assessed.

What was effective about this approach was that the teams not only were responsible for building their own assessment literacy but also helped to build district assessment capacity since many of these teams taught the teachers at their schools what they had learned in assessment.

Bay District Schools in Florida has worked hard to incorporate the Sunshine State Standards and has helped their teachers become aware of using the standards and assessing to the standards.

With grant money this district has developed an online curriculum resource center called Beacon Learning Center (www.beaconlc.org). This center has created a one-stop location for effective lesson plans, student activities, materials, resources and assessment for teachers in Florida. The district produced a stringent validation process for lesson plans, which includes a rubric for scoring the teacher work for consideration to be submitted to Beacon. Teachers working with this group agree that some of the best assessment training they have encountered has been to critique the teacher work and determine if it really gets at understanding and assessing the standards.

This site is also working with SERVE staff to incorporate the assessment training that was used in the district into a web based format for teachers new to the district or as a review. This site is helping the district maintain their focus on building assessment capacity.

11. Develop models – units, assessments, exemplars, etc.

Given the lack of knowledge of quality assessment and the fact

that many teachers 'don't know what they don't know,' a very powerful way to improve teacher knowledge and understanding is for districts to develop model units and/or assessments that are available for all teachers in the district. This has two powerful effects – first, teachers are able to see how successful quality approaches to learning and assessment are with their students, and, second, they have exemplars to use as guides as they develop or revise their own units. These models also can be used as examples for what quality work should look like for students and parents.

12. Have a flexible approach

It is clear that this is not a 'one size fits all' exercise – there are a number of variables involved and so many differences between districts that there is not one definitive recipe that will work for all. The lessons learned should be adapted to the conditions and culture of each district. For example, as regards creating time for teachers: in some districts this will work best as release time during the school year; in some districts pay for time spent after school may work best; while in many districts the most effective work will be done in the summer.

EVALUATION

13. Collect evidence

In this age of accountability, in order for assessment capacity building to be sustained, school districts are going to have to be able to demonstrate the positive effects of quality assessment, especially on student achievement. It is essential that thoughtful efforts be made to collect evidence about how changes in classroom assessment impact student motivation and learning.

Roanoke Rapids and Elizabeth City/Pasquotank School Districts have been working for several years to create district assessments in fourth grade math that get at broader mathematical understanding. They have field-tested the math assessments and collected exemplars to use as evidence of what quality student work should look like.

John Parker from Roanoke Rapids shares: "In our work we are realizing that when teachers look at student work after assessment training they begin to see student work as a rich source of information and understand the need for more consistency in the classroom. They begin to ask questions like, "What am I looking for? What is the purpose for this assessment? Was my criteria clearly stated to the students? Were there areas of bias on the assessment? How many samples of work are necessary for student achievement?"

14. Encourage action research by teachers

Action research is particularly valuable because it provides teachers with the evidence they need to support their hard work and with the information on what needs to change. If there are ways for teachers to present to peers their findings about the impacts of the changes in classroom assessment they make (and receive recognition for their efforts), its value will be even greater.

Summary of lessons learned. The lessons learned outlined above provide an organizer for a district to think about prior to beginning any professional development initiative. In the authors' opinion, the most important aspects to think about may be how well the district:

- Creates time
- Requires classroom application and structure follow-up

- Organizes resources, especially staff, to support change
- Collects evidence (to help look at student and teacher work).

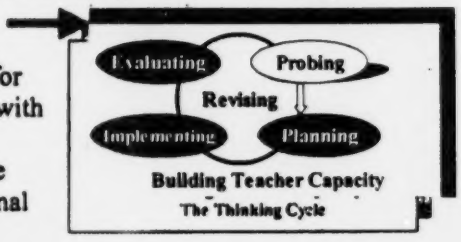
These four actions represent a significant departure from common practice in professional development (the one-shot workshop). They also directly relate to what more than 1,000 Bay District teachers participating in professional development in classroom assessment reported as important needs. Together, they suggest that engaging in learning about how to improve classroom assessment practices is a long-term process, not likely to happen in a single year and not likely to happen within the context of teachers acting in isolation.

To educate all students to higher levels of learning around prioritized state and district standards, teachers will need time and support in constantly revising their instruction and assessment based on how well students are performing. Districts will need to help schools provide opportunities for teachers to continuously improve classroom assessment in a variety of ways that might include:

- Collecting, reviewing and reading relevant research,
- Searching for high quality instructional materials and assessments,
- Talking to peers about ideas,
- Developing and trying out new assessment methods that give them better information about how to help students improve,
- Reflecting on the quality of work they assign and making it more rigorous and challenging,
- Exploring the role of rubrics in helping students internalize expectations for quality work,
- Searching or observing others use practices like peer or student self-assessment in ways that develop student responsibility for learning,
- Experimenting with how to document student learning on classroom goals,
- Examining grading practices in light of state and district standards.

It is increasingly clear as one reads through the kinds of ways teachers might go about improving classroom assessment practice that professional development in classroom assessment is part of a bigger picture of how adult learning is structured and the extent to which continuous improvement of practice is expected of teachers.

Building a Framework for District Strategies to Leverage Teacher Change



In the previous section we identified a cycle of planning for continuous improvement that emerged from experiences with districts engaged in providing teachers' professional development in classroom assessment. In this section, we will explore how districts might reflect on their professional development efforts within the context of a broader framework.

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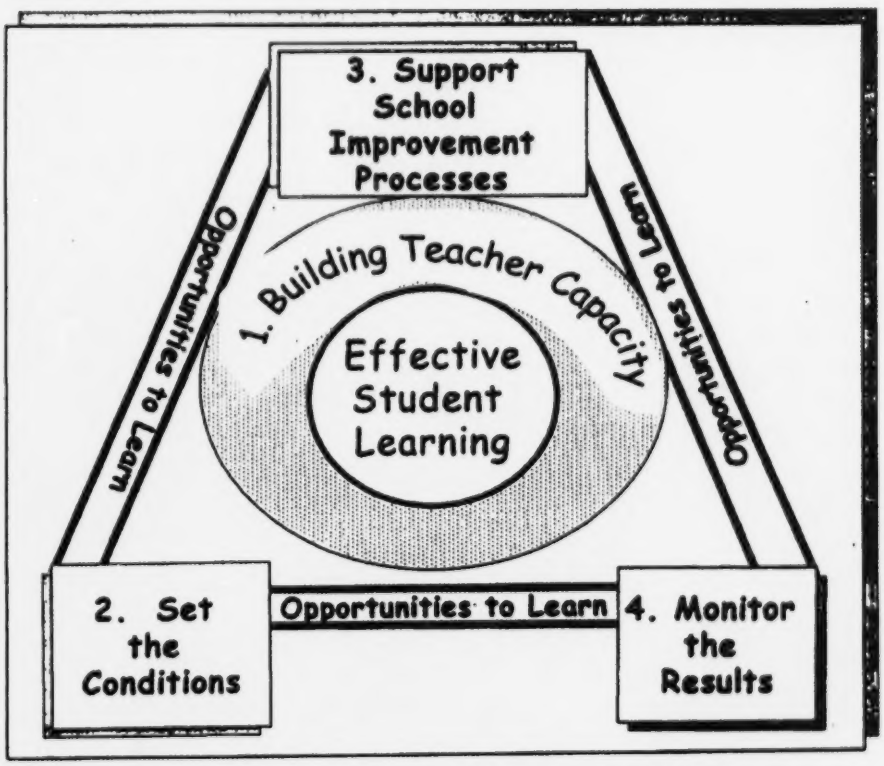
There is no road to improved student motivation and achievement that does not pass through the classroom. When district leaders are asked what it will take to improve teaching, they mention more or better professional development (Spillane, 2000; Duggan & Holmes, 2000). Yet at the same time, research on professional development suggests that traditional workshop approaches have had little impact on teacher practice on a large scale. "Previous studies of school districts professional development programs offer a less than optimistic account: professional development is firmly rooted in the training paradigm and focused on the individual teacher, typically with short-term activities that involve little follow-up. They are market-oriented and menu-driven and have little coherence or coordination" (Spillane, 2000, p. 1).

Duggan and Holmes (2000) conclude, "Professional development needs to be improved to further develop the educators we need in our classrooms, schools, and in leadership positions. This means giving teachers and principals the opportunity to work together, network, look at student work, and learn from each other. It means giving them the training they need to fully implement the many policies of standards-driven reform. There are standards for high-quality professional development, and yet much money is squandered every year on one-shot workshops that have little effect on instruction" (Duggan & Holmes, 2000, p.2).

Here, we introduce a framework that may help districts conceptualize and critique their direct and indirect strategies for the continuous improvement of classroom practices. The graphic outlines the four major categories for which districts might consider outlining strategies. Once the strategies, used in each of the four categories shown, are described then a district should be able to analyze the likelihood of achieving success. Notice that Building Teacher Capacity is the first category and is in the center of this triangle as we see it as the centerpiece of district improvement efforts. Therefore, we will discuss this category in more depth using a district



example and offer a few basic strategies in the other three categories as an example of how the graphic may help a district think about their particular effort.

1) Efforts to Build Teacher Capacity:

Increasingly, in the last several years, some districts are addressing the need to build educator capacity to improve their classroom practice and are implementing more powerful professional development strategies for improving instruction. For example, Elmore and Burney (1998) describe Community District #2 in New York City as engaged in a long-term continuous improvement process rather than the more typical special projects approach to professional development. The project approach to improvement is time-bound, for example for a year, disconnected from previous staff development efforts, and used to introduce teachers to a new concept, initiative, or set of materials, with little evaluation of teacher follow-through in the classroom. In contrast, they describe Community District #2 as having a "well-worked out system-wide strategy for influencing classroom instruction". The key elements to the strategy are:

1) A focus on specific content areas over time (like literacy)
2) Strong investments in various forms of professional development structured to provide support for engaging in new forms of instructional practice
3) Development of strong professional networks across schools to reduce isolation and develop a district-wide culture
4) Implementation of individual accountability processes such that principals and teachers are held responsible for quality learning environments
5) Structures for negotiation between schools and the district leaders on expectations for performance given individual differences between schools

Other points noted about District #2's efforts at building capacity:

- The district spends 4% of its total budget on professional development for teachers and principals. Professional development is a general strategy for improvement rather than a department or isolated administrative function. The following statements are the five strategies used:

    a) A Professional Development Laboratory
    b) Instructional Consulting Services delivered to individual teachers and school teams
    c) Inter-visitations and Peer Networks
    d) Off-site Training (e.g., designed to introduce successively larger numbers of teachers to a central concept of teaching in a content area)
    e) Oversight and Principal Site Visits (e.g., district staff spend two days per week in schools monitoring progress on instructional improvement)

- Principals are viewed as key players. The district trains and retains principals based on their ability to function as instructional leader, which includes recruiting, nurturing, and counseling-out of teachers when needed. Accountability for school improvement

involves an ongoing negotiation between principals who understand their school's unique characteristics and district leaders who want to see results from all schools.

The advantages of closely reading a case report like that of Community District #2 is that district leaders can compare and contrast their professional development strategies to those used by Community District #2. Do they have a set of strategies that seem more or less powerful in terms of impacting instructional improvement (building teacher capacity) over time?

Case studies of districts involved in standards-based reform have pointed out other areas that are indirect influences on teachers' classroom practice (Laboratory Network Program, 2000; Goertz and Massell, 1999). It is important that districts analyze how these other areas support or perhaps hinder efforts at building educator capacity to improve the quality of the classroom. Below we share the other three categories and a list of some strategies that can indirectly shape classroom teaching and learning.

2) Setting the Conditions for Continuous Improvement

These strategies represent the kinds of things district leaders engage in that set the parameters for organizational capacity building.

- Defining high academic standards; identifying broad learner outcomes
- Engaging the public in strategic planning
- Providing curriculum guides and instructional materials
- Finding external partners and resources
- Communicating a consistent vision
- Using district-wide committees to develop teacher leaders

3) Supporting School Improvement Processes

These strategies include the things districts do to empower schools as learning organizations in their own right.

- Encourage schools to define Standards of Classroom Practice
- Create more time and resources for teacher collaboration around "working on the work"
- Have regular informal school reviews
- Provide district coaches/assistance for struggling schools
- Establish professional development committees at schools who are accountable for how adult learning is structured

4) Monitoring the Results (process and outcomes)

These strategies include ways districts can monitor district, school, and student progress on important dimensions.

- Supplement state tests with district assessments
- Require teachers to assess certain outcomes as part of a portfolio process

- Find ways to assess the quality of instruction
- Develop electronic portfolios to help teachers manage data

We do not show the above strategies as the "right set" but rather as an example of how a district could outline its direct and indirect strategies for impacting classroom quality, and therefore begin to examine the package in terms of pieces missing and likelihood of their resulting in instructional improvement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

"*There has been a strong tendency in recent federal and state policy initiatives to by-pass or ignore districts' role in the change process.... In many ways, districts are the major source of capacity-building for schools, structuring, providing or controlling access to professional development, curriculum, and new instructional ideas, more and qualified staff, relationships with external agents, and so on.*" (pg. 17, Goertz and Massell, 1999)

Working in an organization that straddles the line between the worlds of practice and research, it is important to reflect on what research is needed to help districts make informed decisions about professional development. There is research that makes a strong case for the relationship between effective classroom assessment practices and positive student outcomes (Crooks, 1988; Black and Wiliam, 1998). But, we have very little research that helps districts lay out a strategy for improving classroom assessment practices over a sustained period of time. The problem in helping teachers improve in their use of assessment in the classroom is no different from the bigger picture of teacher change as described by Richard Elmore.

"*A significant body of circumstantial evidence points to a deep, systemic incapacity of American schools, and the practitioners who work in them, to incorporate, develop, and extend new ideas about teaching and learning in anything but a fraction of schools and classrooms. This incapacity, I will argue, is rooted primarily in the incentive structures in which teachers and administrators work. Therefore, solving the problem of scale means substantially changing these incentive structures*" (Elmore, 1996, p. 294).

The two quotes above, along with our field-based experiences, lead us to conclude that districts are key to any effort to improve teacher practice in assessment on a large scale but the obstacles loom large. In reflecting on our past experiences with classroom assessment and on the research emerging on the district role in professional development, we suggest several areas for future study.

1) How can professional development most effectively be provided to improve classroom assessment practices? Several reviews of the literature on the use of assessment in classrooms conclude there are substantial problems with current practice (Crooks, 1988; Black and Wiliam, 1998; Shepard, 2000). Black and Wiliam summarize some of the problems with classroom assessment as:

1) Classroom assessment practices generally focus more on superficial or rote learning, concentrating on recall of isolated details, which students soon forget.
2) Teachers do not review their assessments/assignments or get peers to review them so there is little critical reflection on what is being assessed and why.
3) The grading aspect of assessment is overemphasized and the learning or improvement purpose of assessment is underemphasized.

Shepard (2000), based on a review of the role of classroom assessment in teaching and learning, suggests that the following changes should be encouraged:

1) Changing the nature of the assessment conversations teachers have with students such that students develop greater knowledge and responsibility for learning goals.
2) Assessing students' prior knowledge and using that information in planning better instruction to meet their needs and match their interests.
3) Giving students feedback in ways that go beyond grades such that they are helped to understand what quality work or thinking looks like.
4) Getting clearer about the explicit criteria for open-ended/performance tasks and involving students in self-assessing.
5) Using information from students to evaluate and improve teaching strategies.

Stiggins (1999) has been perhaps the most ardent advocate of the need for "assessment literacy". He advocates a "learning team" approach to engaging teachers in learning about classroom assessment. Others argue that professional development should primarily be structured within the context of the disciplines/content taught and not as separate methodologies (e.g., cooperative learning, classroom management, technology, assessment) that the teacher then has to figure out how to fit into the content area taught.

The results of two curriculum intervention studies (Wilson & Sloane, 2000; White & Fredericksen, 1998) seem to indicate that teachers' work on curriculum changes (implementing new instructional and assessment materials in a course or a unit) had significant impact on student achievement only in conditions where there were opportunities for discussing with peers the quality of student work that results. That is, just giving teachers good performance tasks (assessments) to use in their course may not necessarily lead to better learning unless there is involvement with other teachers or external experts on how to use the assessments, decipher what the assessments say about student learning and change instruction to result in better student performance.

More research is needed on how best to structure professional development on classroom assessment. For example, should districts

- Offer year-long, job-embedded courses on classroom assessment,
- Organize and support teacher "learning teams" who engage in self-study,
- Provide quality assessment materials to teachers along with opportunities to talk with other teachers about student results on those assessments?
- Mandate teacher participation in the initiatives involving assessment?
- Offer individualized feedback to teachers on how they can improve their use of assessment?

2) Is engaging teachers in working on the quality of work given students a better way to focus district energies and discussions than the broader goal of improved classroom assessment?

One of the problems with tackling the improvement of classroom assessment as a district goal is that it is so overwhelming. One review of the research on teacher change suggested that sustained change in teaching practice is unlikely if either the suggested change is too trivial or requires radical or fundamental changes in a short period of time (Gersten et al, 1997). The authors suggest, for example, that the changes described by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards may be too removed from current practice and too unspecified to expect of teachers with little support. The same may perhaps be said for the kinds of changes outlined by Shepard above that are needed in classroom assessment. Thus, care must be given to how suggested improvements to practice are described and staged for teachers.

The reflections on Community District #2's experiences are interesting in that the authors report that, initially, professional development was focused on key instructional strategies or perhaps, identified "best practices" (Learning Research and Development Center, 1999). Over time, district administrators, professional developers, and principals increasingly began to focus on "high quality student work". The depth and quality of student work has become the language used in talking about improving classrooms.

"*System-level administrators constantly referred to the fact that the first thing they look for when they visit schools and classrooms is evidence that students are working at high levels of effort on important aspects of academic content, that student work is prominently displayed, discussed and analyzed in schools, and that students and teachers are able to make judgments in their own daily work about whether they are engaged in important and challenging work. District administrators, for example, consistently ask students in the classrooms they are visiting whether they are working hard and whether they are interested in or bored by what they are doing*" (LRDC, 1999, p. 21).

Validating this emerging focus on the quality of work, in a separate study, Newman, Bryk, and Nagaoka, (2001) found evidence that students who received assignments that involved more rigorous intellectual work achieved higher performance on standardized tests than students who received lower quality assignments. More research is needed on how concentrated efforts by districts to engage teachers in improving the quality of work unfold and whether focusing efforts in this concrete way lead to improvements in the kind of best practices in classroom assessment envisioned by Stiggins and Shepard.

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Appendix A

1. Bay District Story on Building Assessment Capacity
2. Baseline Data from Volunteer Schools
3. Summary Sheet of TARGET Assessment Training Data
4. Teacher Satisfaction with Target Training
5. Teacher Comments about Impacts of Training
6. Teachers' Responses about Areas Needing Assistance

Districts can work collaboratively with universities, labs, or other districts to build assessment capacity – below we share a partnership example from one of our research and development sites:

Reflections of a District's Growth – From the Field

By Patricia Schenck,

Assessment Resource Teacher in Bay District (850-872-4352)

Past Accomplishments of our Collaborative Research and Development

Since the advent of the Florida Sunshine State Standards in 1995, Bay District has been working toward systemic standards-based reform that brings curriculum, instructional strategies, and classroom assessment practices into alignment with state standards. During this time, SERVE has served a vital role as our educational partner. This partnership has not only allowed us to implement intensive research and development projects within three district schools, but also enabled us to implement in-service training for all district teachers - over 2000 teachers and administrators to date. These experiences have prepared district teachers to create quality classroom assessments and implement an instructional and assessment system in classrooms that supports state standards. Throughout this process, SERVE has helped up with technical support, developed training models, facilitated planning and goal setting meetings, aided in our grant writing efforts, provided data-analysis and evaluation services, and supported classroom implementation work. With this partnership our district has been able to view our progress in a more systemic process.

It is clear that true systemic reform is a long-term process. As a district, our goal has been to show continuous incremental improvement that over time will lead to meaningful and sustainable change. In the standards-based reform arena, our efforts and experiences over the past five years have placed our district in a unique position. Our teachers are now prepared to create tangible, performance-based models of standards implementation. This work could not have been accomplished five years ago. Five years ago, our district needed to begin building capacity for improvement somewhere, and with SERVE's help, we began with the new Sunshine State Standards and Classroom Assessment. We are proud of the intensive work we have done here, but at the same time we realize that our work has just begun if we want to continue to improve student achievement.

What we have accomplished over the past five years:

Our vision for our teachers:

> **"For each standard, we want teachers to have a clear picture of the achievement target and have a shared understanding of the student performance needed to meet that standard."**

Part one of our Research and Development Project – the early years:

Standards Work - Phase I

- **Professional Development**
  –Connections Training (all staff)
  –Alignment of CAI to New State Standards
- **Leadership**
  –PS101 (Principals training sessions)
  –AP Research Group
  –Leadership Institutes
  –SERVE Leads
- **Research & Development**
  –Beacon (Learning Web site)
  –Site Analysis of Standards Implementation

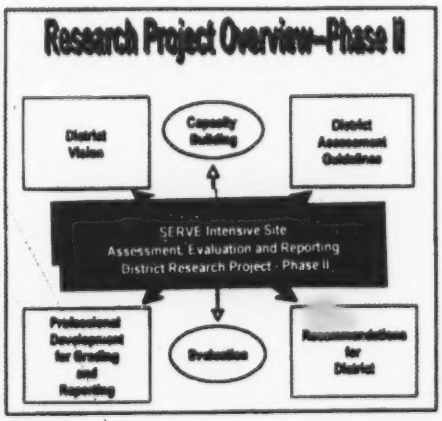
Phase I - Lessons Learned

- Districts should not work on parts in isolation
- All parts must be considered as a whole
- Teachers must "Unpack the Standards"
- Standards must match assessments and instructional strategies

Some of our accomplishments with building assessment capacity:

- Developed a district vision tied to student achievement
- Supported professional development tied to the vision
- Developed district policy and guidelines around assessment or other initiatives
- Conducted research and development during the process and used the data to make informed decisions
- Obtained resources and supported collaboration at all levels within the district
- Created a standards implementation model

Part II of our Research and Development work – past two years



Assessment work - Phase II

- **Professional Development**
  –Target/SERVE Quality Assessment
  –Creating Writers
  –Reading Framework
  –Grading & Reporting
- **Leadership**
  –Assessment Staff / Liaison
  –Assessment School Teams
  –District Assessment Committee
  –ASCD Assessment Consortium
  –SERVE
- **Research & Development**
  –Alternative Assessment Implementation
  –Grading & Reporting
  –Standards-Based Reporting

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Assessment Lessons Learned

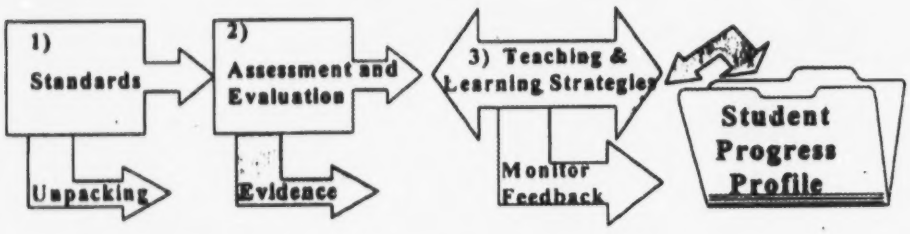
- Quality Assessments determine student achievement
- Teachers need assistance in understanding assessment methods (D, F, & S)
- Changes in assessments will lead to changes in grading practices and reporting methods
- District assessment guidelines must be developed for consistency

With this collaborative relationship, SERVE has had a significant impact not only on our district's teachers but also on our students. State assessment data shows steady increases in student achievement. Our state accountability system recognized six A schools in our district this year. We did not have any A schools last year.

Next Steps for Bay District

We recognize that the ultimate indicator of student performance is the production of educated citizens that are prepared to enter the workforce or be successful in higher education. Our graduation rate, or percent of students who complete high school in a four-year period, is cause for concern. Our most recent data shows a graduation rate of only 56%. This places our district 58th of 67 districts in the state of Florida. In addition, we have a significant population of at-risk students. Although Bay District cannot be considered a *low-performing district*, each of our schools serves a population of *low-performing students*. Addressing the needs of these students is currently our number one district priority and a clear area of need.

Currently, we have identified our area of greatest need and will need SERVE's help to continue our work. We have used SERVE's graphic below as our district guide when thinking about creating a standards-based system; the darkest gray area (Monitoring and Feedback) is where we need to continue our work. We have worked diligently to build capacity in 1) Standards and 2) Assessment over the past five years, but now we must begin to build on the 3) Teaching and Learning Strategies to monitor what is happening with standards and assessment in the classroom.



So, clearly our next steps include:

- Develop a Standards-Implementation Plan for the District
- Design a research study
- Create a Standards Implementation Plan Team to develop proficiency models
- Implement proficiency models in a feeder school pattern
- Monitor process for effectiveness

- Collect feedback from participants
- Assess the overall impacts
  –Proficiency rating of students
  –Implementation of SIP
  –Policy changes (based on Classroom Assessment Guidelines)
  –Grading & reporting changes

For a copy of Bay District's Guidelines for Classroom Assessment contact:
Bay District Schools
850-872-4352

Benefits of our Partnership with our Regional Educational Laboratory

We know that SERVE has benefited from our collaborative relationship over the past five years. They have been able to develop training materials, look at processes, and build a trainer network in Bay District and use theses resources in other districts or areas of their work. We are proud to be able to send our teachers or staff to conferences to present what we have done here or into others districts to conduct training or help in planning for systemic change. We have been able to share our expertise and resources, developed as a result of our work with SERVE, with many visitors SERVE sends to our district. We have also been asked to host the 2001 Spring ASCD Assessment Consortium conference in Bay District to share with international school district teams and others our work in the area of standards and assessment and have those individuals provide us feedback on next steps.

Lessons we have learned about building capacity

- Maintain a focus on the vision and maintain a clear vision
- ***Systemic change takes time***
- ***Focus on one step at a time***
- Interim decisions should be based on formative data and broad-based data is essential to make good decisions
- Teachers must have a well-developed support system
- Invest in people – professional development is important and develop customized training
- Develop leadership for the implementation
- ***Collecting research is vital – it supports follow-up and application at the classroom level***
- Beg, borrow, and steal - adapt established models to fit your needs
- ***Locate and provide resources to make the implementation a success***
- Recognize that reform takes long-term dedication
- Working collaboratively with others is vital
- **Looking at work (student and teacher) is necessary to know what is going on in the classroom**
- Realize that you are NEVER finished –there are no 'quick fixes' we must trust our feedback loop for learning

Note the italicized bullets are the same recommendations that O'Connor and SERVE noted as significant because of the classroom impact.

Baseline Data From Volunteer Schools

(May 1996)

Column A

PERCENT OF TEACHERS WHO REPORT *"LESS THAN FULLY UNDERSTAND"*

Column B

PERCENT OF TEACHER WHO REPORT, "USING SUCCESSFULLY"

Category	Patronis		Rosenwald		Rutherford	
METHODS	A	B	A	B	A	B
Notebooks	74%	11%	10%	33%	23%	47%
Performance Tasks	70%	19%	33%	33%	28%	43%
Observations	45%	19%	18%	38%	34%	34%
Videos	66%	11%	27%	24%	34%	39%
Cooperative Groupwork	39%	32%	18%	43%	37%	37%
Exhibitions/Projects	47%	40%	27%	40%	36%	35%
Open-ended Questions	55%	17%	59%	29%	42%	32%
Debates/Skits/Oral Performances	63%	14%	27%	20%	44%	21%
Graphic Organizers	68%	14%	23%	43%	45%	25%
Logs/Journals	50%	19%	23%	24%	46%	24%
Portfolios	55%	22%	5%	29%	50%	18%
Interviews	74%	14%	41%	20%	53%	13%
Anecdotal Records	71%	11%	50%	14%	67%	11%
ASSESSING QUALITY	A	B	A	B	A	B
Rubrics	84%	11%	24%	38%	77%	17%
Critiques of student work samples	89%	3%	39%	14%	67%	18%
Peer feedback	78%	3%	29%	29%	60%	16%
Student self-assessment	78%	9%	24%	19%	58%	17%
Student-led parent conferences	86%	0%	62%	14%	82%	4%
Standards/benchmarks	78%	9%	57%	14%	63%	27%

Baseline data in Bay District Schools – school field test sites for Phase I of SERVE Project - Building Assessment Capacity

Based on Preliminary Analyses for the Target Training Evaluation by SERVE

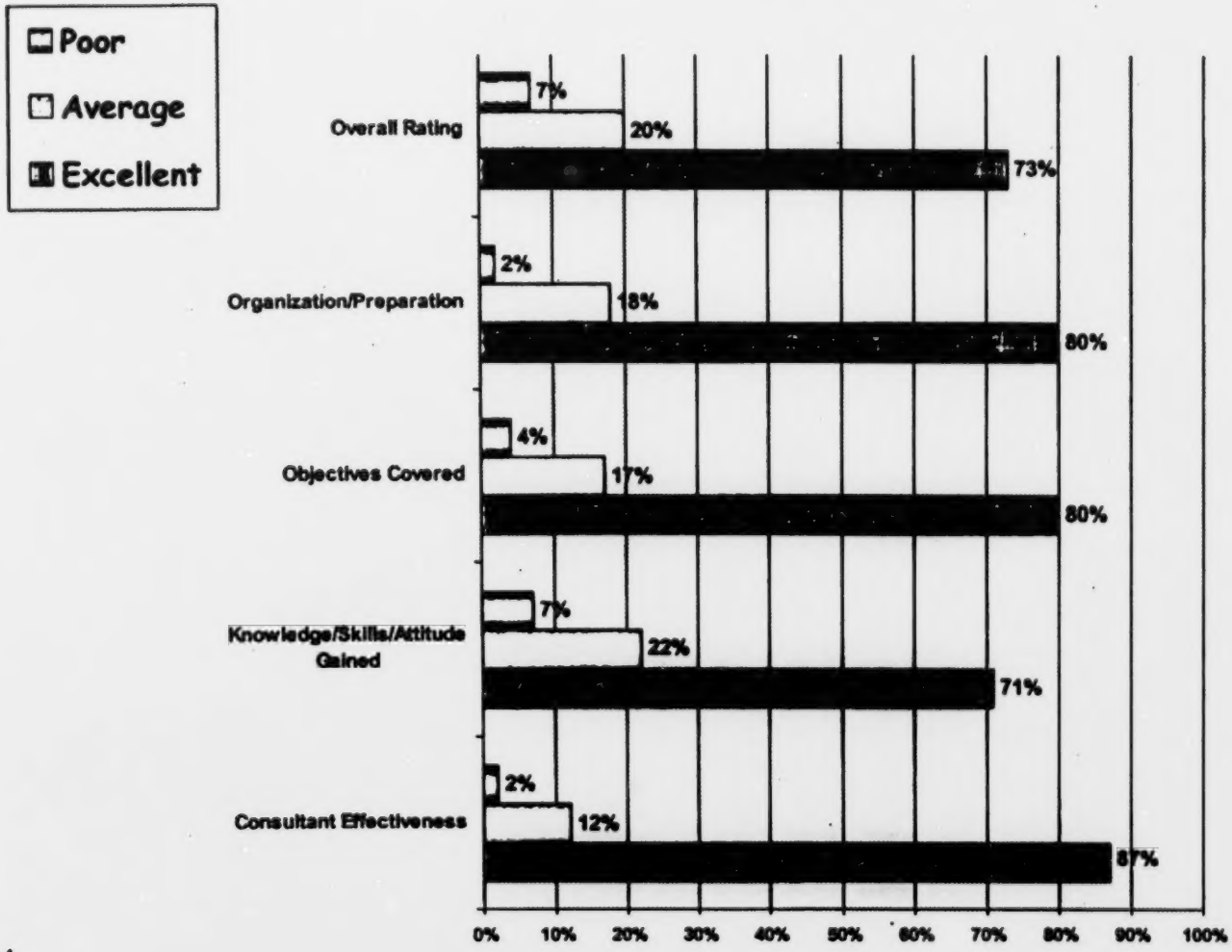
Appendix A – Sample 3

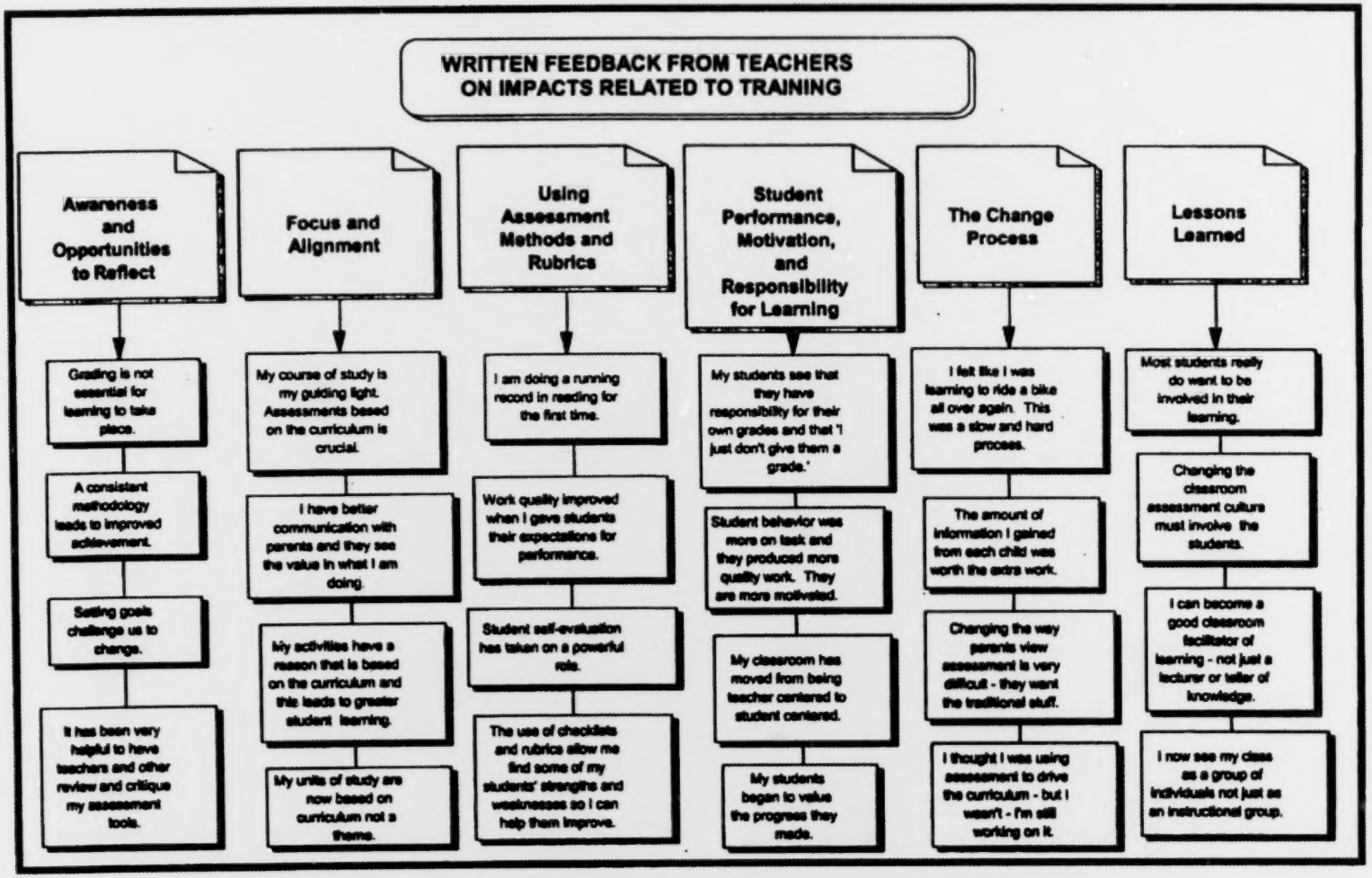
TARGET ASSESSMENT TRAINING INITIATIVE - DATA SUMMARY

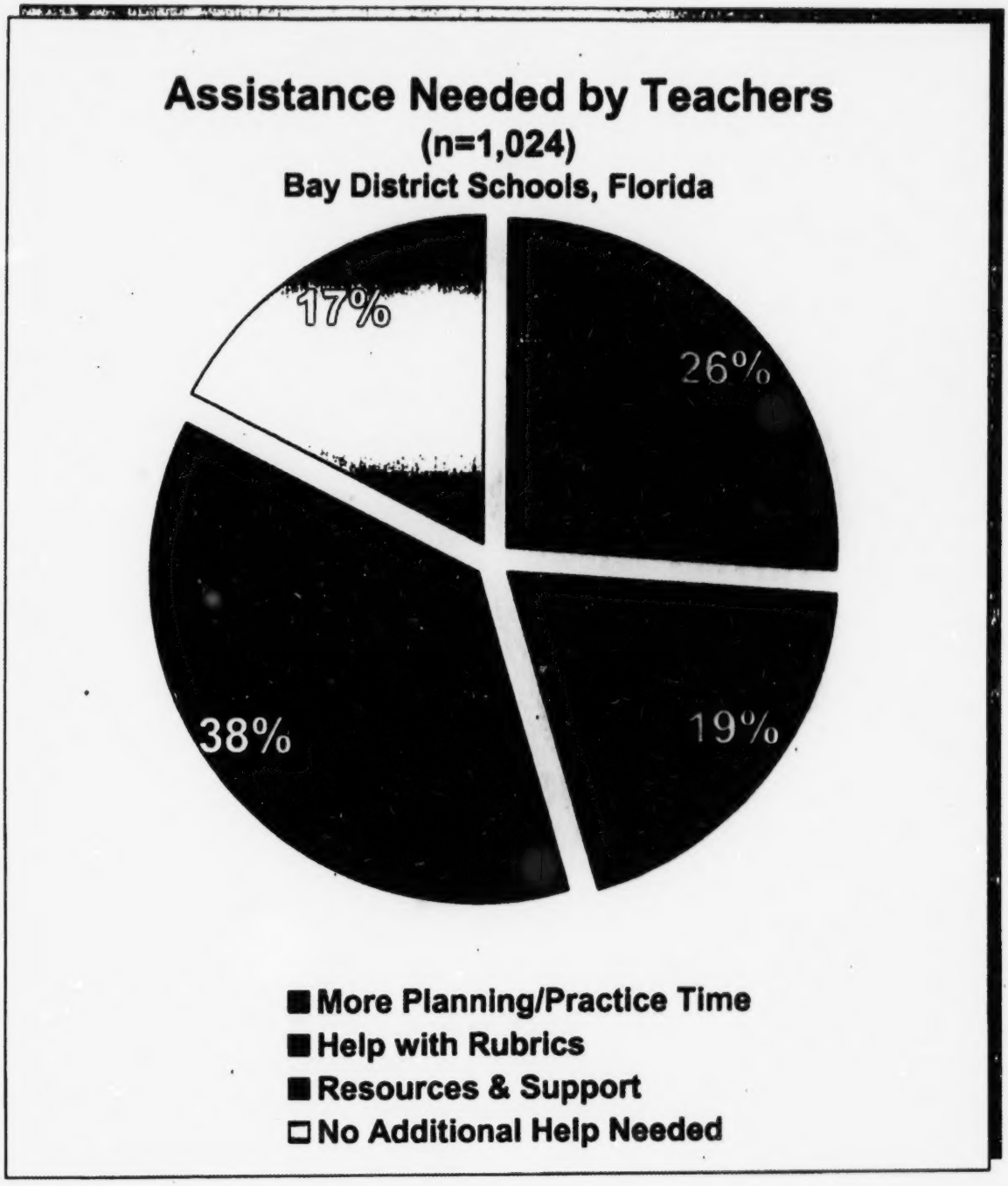
Bay District Schools 1999-2000

TOPIC TARGETED FOR TEACHER PERCEPTIONS	NUMBER RESPONSES	FINDINGS
Teacher satisfaction for 4-day TARGET Training Initiative for Bay District on Classroom Assessment	1,344	74% (Excellent/above average rating) 26% (Average or below rating)
Assessment tasks created and used with students – collected and reviewed by district staff	947	59% (submitted performance tasks for review) 36% (submitted various other forms of alternative assessments for review) 5% (did not what assessment type they submitted)
Specific content areas addressed by assessment process for submitted task.	620	39% Language Arts 15% Science 15% Vocational Education 31% Total other content areas
Percent of teachers reporting this assessment process different from their traditional practice.	1,044	74% (reflected change in practice) 36% (were already using some alternative assessments)
Specific area noted as different in what the teacher did or used?	690	40% (reported use of rubrics as major difference) 28 % (reported seeing assessment as a process and not just as a test or thing done to students) 32% (other differences included student involvement, standards more important, teacher collaboration, and assessment as more important)
Student reaction to teacher change or assessment process used.	1,022	87% (reported students responded very positively) 13% (reported various comments – students more engaged, increased participation, students also thought there was more worked involved)
Teacher assistance needed to sustain assessment knowledge and continued learning.	1,024	80% (reported needing additional assistance with resources, support, and time as important for 64% of this group) 20% (reported no need for additional help – district staff speculated this group contains few who are already good in the use of assessment and others who do not know enough to know what they need).
Overall Analysis After reviewing teacher perception data and submitted tasks.... considerations for next phase of assessment work within district	1. Training motivated teachers to try something different or continue learning about assessment 2. Use of rubrics was limited – teachers identified this as a need 3. Very few teacher reported using rubrics to provide feedback – little seem to understand the use of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment measures or needs 4. Need to find ways to encourage schools and staff to find time for collaborative working on the work 5. Assessment still may not be view as a process – more just a thing – need to find a district explanation for what 'quality' assessment should look like. 6. Assessments used did seem to change – however, the way the assessments were graded and the use of those grades are in question.	

Teacher Satisfaction Rating for TARGET Training 1997-1999




WRITTEN FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS ON IMPACTS RELATED TO TRAINING
Awareness and Opportunities to Reflect
Grading is not essential for learning to take place.
A consistent methodology leads to improved achievement.
Setting goals challenge us to change.
It has been very helpful to have teachers and other review and critique my assessment tools.
Focus and Alignment
My course of study is my guiding light. Assessments based on the curriculum is crucial.
I have better communication with parents and they see the value in what I am doing.
My activities have a reason that is based on the curriculum and this leads to greater student learning.
My units of study are now based on curriculum not a theme.
Using Assessment Methods and Rubrics
I am doing a running record in reading for the first time.
Work quality improved when I gave students their expectations for performance.
Student self-evaluation has taken on a powerful role.
The use of checklists and rubrics allow me find some of my students' strengths and weaknesses so I can help them improve.
Student Performance, Motivation, and Responsibility for Learning
My students see that they have responsibility for their own grades and that 'I just don't give them a grade.'
Student behavior was more on task and they produced more quality work. They are more motivated.
My classroom has moved from being teacher centered to student centered.
My students began to value the progress they made.
The Change Process
I felt like I was learning to ride a bike all over again. This was a slow and hard process.
The amount of information I gained from each child was worth the extra work.
Changing the way parents view assessment is very difficult - they want the traditional stuff.
I thought I was using assessment to drive the curriculum - but I wasn't - I'm still working on it.
Lessons Learned
Most students really do want to be involved in their learning.
Changing the classroom assessment culture must involve the students.
I can become a good classroom facilitator of learning - not just a lecturer or teller of knowledge.
I now see my class as a group of individuals not just as an instructional group.


Assistance Needed by Teachers
(n=1,024)
Bay District Schools, Florida
17%
26%
38%
19%
More Planning/Practice Time
Help with Rubrics
Resources & Support
No Additional Help Needed

Appendix B

1. Interview Protocol

2. Table of Districts Interviewed

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Building District Classroom Assessment Capacity Survey

Name of person/s completing this survey: _____
Position in district: _____
District name: _____
Size of district by student number: _____
Size of district in square miles (kilometers): _____
Number of high schools _____ middle schools _____ elementary schools _____
Percent of minority populations served: _____
Location is: urban _____ suburban _____ rural _____

Please answer the following questions by writing complete responses based on experiences within your district. Please do not limit your response to just the space provided. If you need additional space please finish your answer on the back of the page.

1.Most states have developed standards to describe for districts, schools, and teachers the kinds of skills and knowledge students should be developing. In many cases, these standards, and the associated state tests, have raised expectations for achievement by all students. Districts, schools, and teachers, for the most part, are left on their own to figure out how to teach and assess in ways that will increase student achievement aligned to the standards. What has your district done (at the district level) to attempt to move students towards higher levels of achievement?

2. Recognizing that improvement is a long-term process, how would you characterize your success as a district in moving students toward higher levels of achievement? Which district strategies have been successful and why have they been successful?

3. What are the biggest barriers you have encountered so far in moving as a district towards higher achievement for all students?

4. Knowing that the long-term process for creating change should include attention at the district level to curriculum, assessment, and instruction, the focus of the questions now will mainly be on classroom assessment.

   4.1 As you began to work toward improving student achievement related to standards, what changes did you feel were most needed in student assessment at the school, and district level?

   4.2 As you began to work toward improving student achievement related to standards, what changes did you feel were most needed in student assessment at the classroom level? In other words, what do teachers have to do differently?

5. What has your district done to build teacher's and principal's understanding of the role of assessment as an important part of the learning process in the classroom?

6. How important is building teacher's and principals' skills and knowledge in assessment in your district plan to improve student achievement?

7. Building assessment capacity has been and is an important part of your district's effort (plan) to improve student achievement.

7.2 Who was or is in charge of the professional development component of building teacher and principal's assessment capacity?

7.3 How did this leadership impact on the process of building assessment capacity?

7.4 What components were important in the process of building assessment capacity? For example:

- District Size:
- Planning: (Did you have a plan? How was it developed? Is it part of a district strategic planning initiative? If yes, where does it fit into the strategic plan?)
- Target Group/s: (volunteers, applicants, all, demo schools, school assessment committee/teams, subject teams, etc.?)
- Strategies: (Same strategies for all or different for elementary, middle, and secondary? Were the strategies linked to feeder school groups/families of schools? What buy in mechanisms were used? Was there any link to teacher evaluation?)

7.5 How has the building assessment capacity process been supported financially?

- For example, district staff development funds, grant money, or other sources

7.6 Has an outside agency played a role and how has it helped?

7.7 Were adequate resources provided? In particular, were teachers provided with enough time to get beyond initial training to real application? If yes, how?

7.8 How are you ensuring that the building assessment capacity effort is maintained or expanded?

8. What evidence do you have that your efforts have built assessment capacity for each of the following groups?

- Teachers
- Students
- Parents
- Building administrators
- Central office personnel

9. What have you learned from your efforts to build assessment capacity?

9.1 What worked?

9.2 What did not work?

9.3 What considerations should a district address prior to implementing efforts to build assessment capacity?

10. What role did district policies (approved by the School Board) play in the process of building assessment capacity to improve student achievement?

11.1 Is 'teaching to the state test' seen as a narrowing process that limits what teachers feel they can do in the classroom in your district?

11.2 What have you done in your district to keep the focus on the quality of student learning in general and not just on better test scores?

12. What ideas do you have about how SERVE could be of use in helping districts develop the role of assessment in helping all students achieve at higher levels?

Basic Information on Districts Involved in Study

School District	State	District Staff Completing Survey	District Student Number	Number of Schools			Minority Percent	District Location
				HS	MS	ES		
Alcorn	MS	Director Instructional Services	3,800	3*	1	5	5	Rural
Aurora	CO	Director Instructional Services	30,000	4+3	7	40+1	44	Urban/Sub
Bay	FL	Director Instructional Services and Curriculum Resource Teachers	28,000	4+1	7	22	12	Small City/ Rural
Booneville^	MS	Principal	360	N/A	1	N/A	15	Rural
Collier	FL	Director Instructional Services	32,000	6	9	21	40	Urban
Douglas	CO	Assistant Superintendent	35,000	5	5	31	4	Suburban
Elizabeth City/ Pasquotank	NC	Assistant Superintendent	6,200	1+1	2	7	50	Urban/Sub/ Rural
Forsyth	GA	Curriculum Coordinator	18,000	3	4	12	<2	Suburban
Madison	AL	Coordinator of Secondary Education and Director of Elementary Education	15,500	5	4 (5-8)	12	14	Suburban
McIntosh	GA	Curriculum Coordinator	2,000	1	1	1	50	Rural
Mobile	AL	Coordinator of Staff Development	65,000	18	18	58	50	Urban (mainly)
Quitman	MS	Director Instructional Services and District Test Coordinator	1,700	1	1	1	95	Rural
Roanoke Rapids	NC	Assistant Superintendent	3,200	1	1	2	23	Small town
Waterloo Catholic	ON	Program Supervisor, Secondary	22,440	5	0	47(K-8)	N/A	Urban/Sub/ Rural
York Region	ON	Assessment Project Leader	87,000	22	0	113 (K-8)	N/A	Urban/Sub/ Rural

*two schools 7-12, one school 7-12
^one school only, not district
+alternative schools

Appendix C

1. SERVE's Baseline Classroom Assessment Questionnaire

Appendix C

Code # (birth date) _____ School: _____
Grade Level _____ Subject: _____

There is a collection of terms associated with assessment practices. As a way of better understanding where teachers are in this school, we would like you to answer a few questions about these key terms

UNDERSTANDING	Never heard of it	Heard of it but know little about it	Partially understand it	Fully understand it	Could teach others about it
Student Assessment Methods					
1. Open-ended questions					
2. Performance tests (Labs, manipulatives/ students demonstrate a skill)					
3. Graphic Organizers (concept maps, flow charts, etc.					
4. Logs/Journals					
5. Exhibitions/projects					
6. Debates/Skits/Other Oral performances					
7. Notebooks (An organized collection of all work)					
8. Portfolios (A collection of selected student work)					
9. Cooperative group work					
10. Anecdotal records (Narratives)					
11. Interviews					
12. Observations					
13. Videos					
Assessing Quality of Student Work					
1. Rubrics					
2. Critiques of student work samples (Anchor papers)					
3. Peer feedback					
4. Student self-assessment					
5. Student-led parent conferences					
6. Standards/Benchmarks					

USE	Never used it, have no interest in using it	Would like to use, but need more information	Tried briefly, but discontinued or use rarely	Currently using, but need some feedback/help	Using with good success
Student Assessment Methods					
1. Open-ended questions					
2. Performance tests (Labs, manipulatives/ students demonstrate a skill)					
3. Graphic Organizers (concept maps, flow charts, etc.					
4. Logs/Journals					
5. Exhibitions/projects					
6. Debates/Skits/Other Oral performances					
7. Notebooks (An organized collection of all work)					
8. Portfolios (A collection of selected student work)					
9. Cooperative group work					
10. Anecdotal records (Narratives)					
11. Interviews					
12. Observations					
13. Videos					
Assessing Quality of Student Work					
1. Rubrics					
2. Critiques of student work samples (Anchor papers)					
3. Peer feedback					
4. Student self-assessment					
5. Student-led parent conferences					
6. Standards/Benchmarks					

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Dimensions of Classroom Assessment

On the continua below, circle the number closest to the position that you take in your teaching. A "1" or a "2" indicates alignment with the item on the left. A "4" or a "5" means that you are more closely aligned with the item in the right. A "3" means you are in the middle of the two statements.

I mostly use assessment to give students grades and to report achievement	1	2	3	4	5	I mostly use assessment to help students improve and to improve my instruction.
I see assessment and instruction as interrelated and difficult to separate	1	2	3	4	5	I see instruction and assessment as very different, separate processes.
Given state or district curriculum guides provide the overall framework, instruction is mostly guided by the structure laid out by a textbook	1	2	3	4	5	Given state or district curriculum guides provide the overall framework, instruction is mostly guided by a sense of where students are and what they need. Texts are a resource.
A good deal of instruction time is spent on critical thinking (Compare/contrast, summarize, debate, evaluate, conclude).	1	2	3	4	5	A good deal if instructional time is spent on learning, practicing, recalling, basic facts, and concepts.
Students learn through worksheets, taking notes, doing homework problems, and chapter questions. Grades are mostly based on tests/quizzes.	1	2	3	4	5	Students do a variety of individual and group work. Alternate assessment methods (See first page) are used extensively.
Students learn about what is expected through grades received after work id completed.	1	2	3	4	5	Students learn about what is expected in up-front discussions of criteria and examples of good work.
Students look to the teacher for all evaluations or judgments of the work that they do	1	2	3	4	5	Students internalize criteria for good performance on key competencies and are learning how to assess their own work honestly.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONAIRRE (Baseline Instrument)

On the items below a twofold assessment is called for. The first part is the desirability index. You are rating you opinion about importance of the belief or practice using this scale. The second rating is an implementation index. To what extent do the teachers in your school implement the belief or practice? The rating scales are given below. For each item, please circle a rating from 1 to 5 in the desirability box and 1 to 5 in the implementation box to the right of the item.

DESIRABILITY	IMPLEMENTATION
5 – High Desirability, of treat interest, highly valued	5 – Excellent implementation
4 – Above average desirability or value	4 – Above average, good implementation
3 – Average desirability or value	3 – Average implementation
2 – Of minimal importance or value	2 – Weak implementation
1 – Undesirable, of no value	1 – No implementation

Item	Desirability					Implementation				
	Low				High	Low				High
1. Conscious efforts are made to assess student progress relative to instructional goals that go beyond recall of information	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students' instructional needs are often assessed and instructional decisions are made based on student needs.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students can articulately discuss their progress on key instructional goals.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Students are involved in self-evaluating their progress by gathering evidence (using a portfolio or other means) to show that they have mastered key competencies.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teachers limit the number of assignments for which letter grades or percent cores are given so that students focus more on learning than worrying about "the grade"	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Students often receive individualized feedback on assignments (oral and/or written comments) that will help them improve.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. At this school, we never limit the number of high grades given in the class.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Students have many opportunities to make choice and take charge of the way they will learn a particular topic.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Teachers often talk with students about strengths and goals for improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

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Final Questions

1. How do you assign grades for a reporting period? Briefly describe how you arrive at a report card grade and what percent of the grade reflects short answer, multiple-choice based tests and quizzes (assessment of basic, right/wrong. Factual knowledge). If grades do not apply (e.g. K-2), describe how you report achievement.

2. Assume you are a teacher who uses a variety of alternative assessment strategies (such as those listed on the first page) in addition to traditional tests. What could you tell a teacher who uses primarily traditional (multiple-choice, short answer, matching) methods about how to use of these methods has impacted you or your students?

3. We are interested in specific examples of non-traditional assessments used by teachers in your school. Think of an assessment (task, project, journal, portfolio, presentation, etc.) event that you think either had a positive impact on you or your students and describe below why you used it and why you liked it.

Describe the assessment event:

The purpose (why you used it and what it assessed):

Why you liked it:

4. Do you have any thought about where you would like to your school go in terms of assessment beliefs, practices, or skills?

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